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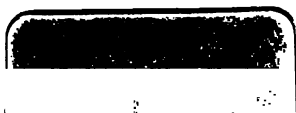
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'REST UNTO YOUR SOULS'













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AUTHOR OF 'REST UNTO YOUR SOULS,' ETC.



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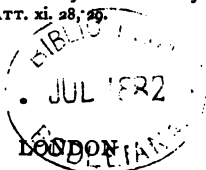
OR,

## The Enjoyment of Peace.

BY THE REV. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SURE FOUNDATION,' 'THE CONSECRATED LIFE,  
ETC.; EDITOR OF 'CHRISTIAN PROGRESS,' 'LIVING WATERS,'  
AND 'THE CHURCHMAN'S PENNY MAGAZINE.'

'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn  
of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest  
unto your souls.'—MATT. xi. 28, 29.



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## PREFACE.

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**A**N attempt is made in the following pages not only to show, as a matter of doctrine, how real and complete is the Rest to be found in Christ by those who come to Him, but also, as far as human words can do so, really to lead the reader into the enjoyment of what is here described.

The fact that our Lord speaks of Rest as something to be actually '*found*' is the keynote of the book. And it is a matter of the deepest regret that so many earnest and spirit-taught souls never seem to get beyond the *seeking* for it. Not only do they lose in their own experience the calm and quiet restfulness of soul in the midst of all life's outward trials, which is so essential a feature of true Christian life, but they fail to exercise the power and

influence for Christ which always follows the exhibition of real Rest.

Rest in Christ is the universal heart-need of man, and those who have come to Him should aim not only at finding and enjoying it, in all its reality and depth, for themselves, but also at showing to others how real and abiding it is—thus winning others to seek and find it. Successful soul-seekers must themselves have souls at Rest.

These papers appeared in *Christian Progress* last year; and so many letters were addressed to the writer, testifying to blessing received through them, that he now issues them, revised and slightly enlarged, for separate circulation. And if the Master continues to own and bless them, His servant will rejoice over it with those who receive the blessing.

ENGLEFIELD,  
BENGEO, HERTFORD.

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## ‘REST UNTO YOUR SOULS.’



### I.

#### *The Rest Itself.*

**R**EST! How much there must be wrapped up in this one short word! What a wondrous mine of spiritual wealth, ever opening up fresh treasures as the soul's experience enters more and more deeply into the unfathomable depths of its meaning.

It is a short word; but it contains more than the deepest experience of the most Spirit-taught heart has ever yet fully comprehended. In fact, it contains ALL that there is for the Christian in Christ to meet the most profound need, as well as the highest and noblest aspirations of the human heart. It is the one word which our Lord chooses to express the blessed-



ness, in all its endless variety of application, of the soul which comes to Him. It is the sum total of what He promises they 'shall find' in Him who accept in faith and simplicity His beautiful invitation, 'Come unto Me.'

We shall endeavour in these pages to suggest some very practical thoughts about this 'Rest.' But we shall not attempt or pretend to exhaust the subject, for the simple reason that it is inexhaustible. It is an ever-flowing perennial stream, from whose waters every soul may find a living supply in its every and most peculiar and most secret need. We can only suggest some thoughts which may be helpful in pointing out the fulness and the reality of the supply. And we hope that many may be led by our words to drink for themselves in the constant application of the subject to their own ever-varying and special condition of both inward and outward circumstances.

And be it remembered that we are dealing now not so much with doctrine as with experience. 'Rest' is just a subject of this sort. It is no subject for argument, but for experimental acquaintance. And for this very reason, unlike doctrine, which may be carefully and closely defined, it has no bound or limit. The

experience of one heart may be very far in advance of another. One Christian can tell far more about it than another, whose experience may have fallen so far short. Indeed, one may make assertions about its inward experience, which may seem to another overdrawn and impossible ; but only because that other one has not yet entered so deeply into it.

Moreover, it is an experience which, perhaps, is not always so blessedly enjoyed, even by the same heart at every moment, and under all circumstances. We are not saying that this *ought* to be, or that there is any absolute necessity that it *should* be. But, alas ! it *may* be so, and too often it is the case. And this is so just because the whole matter is thus one of such inward experience. It is because it depends, for its uniform flow, upon the constant and uniform exercise of certain dispositions of mind and heart towards Christ (which we shall describe further on), that its enjoyment may thus vary in the same heart from time to time. Indeed, to maintain the Rest requires the careful exercise in constant watchfulness of all the faculties and powers of the renewed heart.

And we may here say, in a general way, what

will hereafter be more fully unfolded, that **what-**  
**ever**—either in the general disposition towards  
Christ, or in any one personal habit of life—  
paralyzes the exercise of these faculties and  
powers, is sure to reduce, if not for the time  
actually to eclipse, our experience and enjoy-  
ment of Rest.

What *should* be, and, thank God, *may* be, the  
experience of the heart which enters into the  
meaning of our Lord's teaching in the passage  
before us, is an *increasing* enjoyment of Rest.  
Time should reveal to us more and more its  
vast breadth, its profound depth, and its infinite  
height. Not only, we mean, as the sterner  
realities of life, and its deeper shadows of per-  
plexity, sorrow, loss, sickness, and bereavement  
beset our path, and we are able, with increasing  
years, still to find Rest in what would have  
crushed us completely in years gone by. This,  
of course, should always be so.

But there is another development of growth,  
which is just as real, and within the reach  
of those also who have as yet escaped these  
darker paths. We should be ever finding out  
fresh scope for the experience of Rest. We  
should be constantly discovering its ever ex-  
*tending application* in every direction in daily

life. We should be continually finding out that matters which we thought to be outside its sphere, or which perhaps it never occurred to us to connect with it, just because they seemed so trifling, or so unconnected with what we were accustomed to call 'religion,' come most blessedly within its all-embracing reach.

Then we must notice carefully what is the idea suggested by Rest.

The word, as it is here used by our Lord, supposes, of course, a previous state of unrest. Indeed, this idea is always inseparable from it. The word itself is an experimental one. It speaks, we mean, of an *experience actually gone through*, or it means nothing at all. There can be no Rest where there has been no previous experience of toil or disquiet. There may have been an entire absence of disturbing elements, or they may not as yet have been discovered to exist. But this condition, whatever else it might be called, could never be spoken of as Rest.

This is very clear in our Lord's words before us. We notice that He is addressing those whom He describes as 'All ye that labour and are heavy laden.' It is to those who know experimentally their need that He offers Rest;

to those, that is, who in their own inner consciousness, without even any further explanation from Himself, are able to attach a very real meaning to His words. And probably many who read these pages can enter very fully into the meaning of His words from their own heart's experience. They are conscious of their need of a Rest which they do not enjoy. It may be about sin, or about anything else; but their own experience is the only commentary they require upon these divine words. Such it is especially whom we hope to help. They recognise their need; and we so long to point out to them the glorious and all-sufficient remedy so near at hand.

We must be careful not to limit the application of the expressions 'labour' and 'heavy laden' in any one particular direction, or we just so far limit the reach of the promise which follows. We are not to think only of sin, as is so often done, when these words are used as the text for Gospel addresses. It embraces this, and very aptly describes the soul's experience under a sense of condemnation, before it realizes Gospel forgiveness. But the true meaning goes much deeper than this. All spiritual burdens of every sort and kind (with-

out the slightest exception whatsoever) must be included.

And more even than this. We have no right to make any difference between what are generally called 'spiritual' and 'temporal' burdens in thinking of the promised Rest. Our Lord's supply reaches to the very utmost extent of our need, and infinitely far beyond it. Every burden which can by any possibility press upon a human heart must be within the compass of the Rest which He offers.

And then let us remember that Rest means, as the word used in the original language implies, a cessation from the troubled condition, a glorious calm.

And next we must carefully note the sphere in which this calm finds its blessed realization. Our Lord describes it as '*Rest unto your souls.*'

Here again we must fix no limit, such as might be suggested by the idea which, in mere popular religious phraseology, is generally attached to the word 'soul.' Frequently the very common limitation of the Rest to the sin-burden arises from a narrow interpretation given to the 'soul.'

But 'soul' in the New Testament has a very wide range of meaning. The Greek word so

translated here is rendered by 'life' forty times in the New Testament, by 'soul' fifty-eight times, by 'mind' three times, by 'heart' twice. It comprehends all that we understand by a man's life or existence, his separate and individual being. Distinct from the lower and material part called the 'body,' as also from the higher and spiritual nature, called his 'spirit,' the soul expresses *the man himself* in the individuality of his own actual existence—that which he speaks of as 'I myself.'

Hence we must give to the expression 'Rest unto your souls' an equally wide interpretation. It means a calm, quiet Rest of the whole inner being. The restless, disturbed condition has been experienced in its reality, but now it has passed away. Every emotion of the whole existence is at peace; every faculty is at rest; every yearning is satisfied.

And thus we come to another most necessary point to explain.

The Rest, we see, is an inward one of the whole inner consciousness; it is not of the outward condition and circumstances. Nowhere in the New Testament is there promised any freedom from outward sorrows. Rather we *find the very reverse*. 'In the world ye shall

have tribulation,' is just as true as, 'In Me ye might have peace' (John xvi. 33).

The Christian is not exempt from all the outward workings of the original curse on sin. Sickness, pain, and death he must still face. Moreover, the temporal consequences of his sins, and even of his errors of judgment, in loss of health, character, position, means, friends, he must also bear. Neither is he exempt from some of the more inward consequences of sin, in the terrible ravages which it has made in his own nature. He is still liable to feel the keenest edge of temptation, which may appeal fiercely to those evil tendencies remaining in him, which are the sad result of sin. And there is also the heavy sorrow springing from the consciousness of sin actually committed by him in his daily walk. Nor, again, is he free from the workings of the sin which surrounds him on every side in other people. He has to bear with the ingratitude, the unfair dealings, the wrongs, the reproaches, the losses, and all the endless forms of sorrow which fall on him through the sins of others. And he must meet also with the sharp blows of bereavement, which is only another form in which the results of sin make themselves heavily felt.



This is but a faint outline of the various sources of 'tribulation' which we must meet with 'in the world.' Each heart can fill in the details from its own actual experience. But the Rest which our Lord offers is not *from* these varied sorrows, but *under* and *in* them. It is just because we are liable to them, that He calls us to 'come unto' Him. And those who do so, experience not their removal, but a strength and confidence in them all. And this enables them not only to bear them with a sort of sullen resignation, but really to receive them from God, as coming to us either by His direct working, or at all events, by His express permission. And the result of this is a restful calm that rises even to the level of those almost strange but deeply experimental words, 'We glory in tribulations also' (Rom. v. 3). And so we 'find Rest unto our souls.'

## II.

**Christ, the Source of Rest.**

**A**FTER considering the nature, the sphere, and the extent of the Christian's Rest, we next turn to contemplate its source. And it is so necessary to have a clear understanding on this most important point. For, unless the whole subject of Rest is to remain one of mere theory and speculation only, or, in other words, if it is to be a real and personally enjoyed experience, we must have right and very clear thoughts as to the source from whence it flows.

Let us say then, at once, that its source is nothing short of CHRIST HIMSELF. When we have said this, we have in one word said all. Whatever follows will be but the expansion of this. We shall attempt to unfold something of what Christ is, and to point out how every need which can possibly give unrest to the heart of man may find its full satisfaction in Him. **AND**

it will also be necessary to explain clearly our own position in the matter, and to describe the dispositions which are to be displayed by us, if we are really to enjoy Rest.

We must observe carefully, in the words of our Lord which we are considering, what we may so easily lose sight of, just because it is so obviously what He actually said. It is so easy, in seeking for what we think to be the 'deeper-down teachings' of Scripture, to miss much helpful instruction, for the simple reason that it lies on the very surface. Let us see how He calls those 'that labour and are heavy laden' just to HIMSELF. 'Come unto ME.' And He sets HIMSELF before us as the source of the rest. 'I will give you rest.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus our attention is turned to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And just as, when speaking of the Rest itself, we remarked that it is not related so much to doctrine as to experience; so now we must see that its source is not to be regarded as a doctrine, however

<sup>1</sup> With respect to these words we must note that, in the original language, *I* is not expressed, as it often is, only by the use of the first person singular of the verb; but the personal pronoun is also used, calling special attention to the person of the speaker.

precious in itself, but the living PERSON of the Lord Jesus.

We make this remark advisedly, because the enjoyment of the Rest, in its deepest and fullest sense, depends far more than some imagine on the realization of this. Indeed, it is most important to see the distinction which *may* exist between doctrine and the Person of Christ. We say '*may* exist,' because it need not, and, indeed, it ought not to be so. But it will be more helpful to write of dangers which may and do exist, than merely to speak of what *ought* to be.

There are many whose want of rest, if traced up to its real source, would be found to be the result of leaning more upon doctrine than upon HIM. Some, indeed, it is to be feared, lean almost entirely upon doctrine, and very little, if at all, upon His Person. And so the whole matter is shrouded in more or less of unreality.

Let us not be misunderstood. Doctrine is most essential, for it speaks to the heart of the Person, who could not be apprehended rightly without the doctrine in its truest and most simple form. And for this reason we should 'earnestly contend' for sound doctrine. But even this must be kept in its proper place. For

•

many fall, almost unknowingly, into the danger of stopping short in the doctrine, and busying themselves about it, without going on to the Person of whom the doctrine speaks.

How many, alas ! are keen on matters of doctrine, and ready enough to rebuke any real or supposed want of orthodoxy, who are not themselves really converted to God at all. It is one thing to uphold and contend for doctrines, however true in themselves ; it is something much more to deal with the living, personal Christ.

Moreover, there are some most important advantages, from our own point of view, in clearly keeping before us the Person of Christ.

In the first place, our moral and spiritual faculties are finite, and also more or less impaired by indulgence in sin, and by various weaknesses of mind and body. And the more this is the case, the less we are able to take in or grasp abstract truths. We cannot 'realize' them, as we call it. Some are mentally or physically so constituted as to be scarcely able to do so at all. And with all of us there are times when, from various causes connected with *our* physical existence, we are more unable

than at others to find reality in mere doctrines. They seem so unreal to us.

It is equally so with facts and truths connected with earthly things. If they concern matters beyond what we have actually seen, or lie outside the range of our experience, or are beyond our comprehension, there is always more or less of unreality about them. But what gives reality to such facts and truths is any connection they may have with a person. If they speak to us of a living being like ourselves, they come home to us with a reality which they otherwise lack. We no longer try to grapple with the mere abstract truths, and perplex ourselves as to whether we realize them or not. But we are carried on through them to the person of whom they speak, and all, at once, becomes real.

Just so it is with religious truth. It lies altogether outside of our knowledge or experience. It comes to us from without, from God. And so long as it remains merely doctrine, it remains more or less unreal. But the moment our faith, as it were, pierces right through the doctrine, to see the real living Person, who is, so to speak, wrapped up in it, and yet unfolded by it, all becomes so different. Reality takes

the place of unreality ; and a life of dreary hesitation and fruitless effort to serve Him is succeeded by a bright and happy life of simple-hearted confidence and devoted service.

Again, the recollection that doctrines are intended to speak to us of a Person, and to bring us into connection with Him, and are useful to us, in the highest sense, only and just so far as they do so, removes a difficulty which many feel. We often hear of what are called the 'intellectual difficulties' of believing. These take many forms, which we cannot now discuss. But most, if not all, of them vanish, when we come to understand what faith really is.

To so many minds, faith is an intense struggle of the intellect to grasp and realize the truth of some statement or other of God's word. And people talk of this mental process as a 'trying to believe.' Their mind is trying to grapple with a doctrine which is altogether beyond their power of comprehension. Still they try to comprehend it, and lamentably fail. The harder they try, the farther off they seem from what they want to reach. But when we just use the doctrine only so far as it brings the Person to our minds, and simply throw ourselves upon Him of whom it speaks, we find a reality which

we knew not before. We have discovered that true faith is not a mental or intellectual effort to comprehend truths which are altogether beyond our comprehension ; not weakness struggling hopelessly to make itself strong ; but rather a giving up of every effort to search out the unsearchable, and a helpless casting of ourselves upon a Divine Person.

And not only is this true when the awakened soul first seeks relief from guilt through faith in Christ. Then, of course, the resting on His Person brings the assurance of His personal substitution for the sinner, of sin consequently put away, and of our own personal acceptance through the already accepted Person of Christ. But this is also the whole secret of the believer's after-life of Rest in all the varied circumstances of his earthly surroundings. True faith is exactly the same, whether in the first approach for forgiveness and acceptance in the Beloved, or in all the after-experiences of the new life. It is a trustful resting on a Person, from first to last.

Once more, the remembrance that all religious doctrine is, as it were, but the shell which contains and conveys to us the Person of God in Christ, imparts of necessity a tremendous sin-



cerity to all our dealings—not now with *it*, but with *Him*. So long as people deal just with doctrines, they may be, and often are, most insincere. But directly they find out that they have to deal, in the most real sense, with the Person of the Great Heart-Searcher, they either give up religion as too real for them, or else they go forward, in simple-hearted sincerity, to deal personally, heart to heart, with God. All that mixture of the forms of religion with worldliness and habits of sin, which is so fashionable in the present day, would crumble away at once, if people dealt with the Person instead of with mere forms of doctrine. At the same time, the comfort and help which they would then find in doctrines so viewed, and thus sincerely approached, would be infinitely intensified and increased.

And further still, when we have been led by the doctrine and through it to the Person of whom it speaks, then all that the Person is becomes the object of contemplation and trust. This, of course, is the point to which we have intended to lead up, through all that has been said in this chapter. The Person of Christ involves simply ALL THAT HE IS—all that He is in Himself, all that He is in regard to His

Father and ours, all that He is in reference to the Holy Spirit of God,—all His characteristics, and all the resources of His wisdom and power.

We shall not enlarge just now upon these thoughts, because ample opportunities will occur for unfolding them when we come to apply the subject practically in future chapters to the various aspects of the believer's life. The thoughts at which we have now arrived will meet us at every turn.

## III.

**The Human Side of the Question.**

WE now pass on to consider another view of our subject, which is in no way less important than that which was before us in our last chapter. Indeed, we may readily consent to much, if not all, of what has been previously said, and yet fall very far short of any real, unwavering, and permanent enjoyment of the Rest which our Lord promises to those who come to Him.

To acknowledge in a general way that Christ, in His Divine Personality as the God-Man, is the Christian's source of Rest is one thing. Few, if any, real Christians would doubt it for a moment. But it is quite another thing to personally *enjoy* the Rest which may and ought to spring from this. And where so many fail most lamentably is not in the *doctrine* on the subject, but in the actual *experience* of the Rest itself.

The laying hold of it, and the method of its enjoyment, and the possible sources of failure, treated *in a general way*, must be dealt with first. Its application to the various details of the Christian's life will be unfolded in future chapters.

And here we once more call special attention to a glorious truth which, like another already pointed out,<sup>1</sup> may be overlooked, just because it lies so obviously on the surface. We must notice how our Lord so distinctly says that this Rest is something which is to be FOUND, and still further that it SHALL be found by those who come unto Him.

This blessed experience of Rest, then, is to be something more than a mere matter of inquiry and description. It is something far more than a mere object of desire and search. We may very clearly see our need of it, and most earnestly long for Rest; we may listen to discourses or read books upon the subject. We may diligently seek for it, as the one thing which we are sure would satisfy our longing hearts, if only we could obtain it. And in this very diligent seeking we may obtain a sort of

<sup>1</sup> See page 20.

satisfaction from the fact that such a seeking is an evidence of a spiritual mind.

Some, indeed, may fall into the mistake for a time of thinking that this must be the promised Rest. But their mistake at last becomes apparent. Such Rest as they attain is sure to give way in time to the same unsatisfied longing for a Rest not yet reached.

But our Lord has more for us than this. Rest is an experience not only to be desired, longed for, admired, and diligently sought, but to be actually *found*. And in the very words of promise, 'Ye shall find,' we must see that there is wrapped up in this, as in every one of God's promises, not only all that we understand in connection with human promises, but also the absolutely and Divinely sure assurance that the thing promised shall most certainly come to pass.

Since, then, it appears so certain that Rest is a thing to be actually *found* and enjoyed, we may be sure that if any believers are not enjoying it, there is something wrong *somewhere*. Nor need we be in any difficulty as to deciding where the 'something wrong' exists. It is, we may be quite sure, on the believer's side. He has either lost sight of Christ as his Source of Rest,

and has turned aside to other fancied sources, or else he has failed to recognise his own part in the matter, and so has a very slender, if any, grasp on Christ, and consequently does not appreciate and enjoy all that He is.

We use advisedly and thoughtfully these words, 'his own part in the matter,' because they open out a grievous source of failure which so many overlook. Indeed, there are many who shrink from speaking or teaching openly and distinctly on the human side of our dealings with God. They seem afraid of suggesting any such idea as that the human heart can of itself make approaches to God without His direct action upon it.

This of course is very true. But it must be remembered that we are not now describing the first awakening in careless souls of a sense of sin and need. We write for those who have been so far taught of God, by his Holy Spirit, to long for and seek after Rest. And where He has given the spiritual life even in its lowest possible degree, with its varied instincts and longings, He makes this new life so completely part of our own very selves, that the development and exercise of it becomes, under His continued teaching of course, in a deep and

very real sense *our own doing*. It places us under new and very special responsibilities, because it endows us with new and very special powers.

Every Bible reader will have noticed how the New Testament writers, without losing sight of the necessity of God's continued grace, appeal everywhere to believers to act up to their responsibilities and duties as if it were entirely a matter of their own determination and will. They recognise, once for all, that the will is to be, and now has been, renewed by the Holy Ghost; and then they bid the believers act in the power of that renewed will in all the details of Christian life, as those actually in possession of the power to do so.

Very many believers fail to find Rest from a misunderstanding on this point. They *are* real Christians. Of this they are sure. They can perhaps remember some period of real turning to Christ, when they consciously accepted Him as their Saviour; and they have never in any sense abandoned their hope in Him, in spite of much sinful failure. Or if they cannot remember any such particular period of this sort, at all events they know that they do at the present *moment* most truly and really lean upon Him

alone for salvation ; and they long intensely to be brighter and more earnest Christians. But here they lamentably fail. Time and experience add no real enjoyment to their profession of religion. In fact, it is just the reverse of this. They seem to be increasingly unhappy in their religious experiences. Such cases come constantly before us in our dealing with souls, and they exist far more largely than many suppose, and possibly some who read these pages know only too well what we mean.

The secret of their failure is this. With every good intention, and with an earnest longing to be better, they languidly wait on year by year, expecting that God will some day act more powerfully upon them, and stir them up more strongly than before to a higher enjoyment of Christian life. They are constantly praying for the Holy Spirit, and wondering why they seem to get no response, in some 'fresh baptism' of the Spirit, which they can recognise by some actual physical emotions. But they just lose sight of the fact that He is *already* dwelling in their hearts. They are always asking for grace and strength, which is already, in the fullest sense, at their disposal, if they would but believe it, and act at once in power of it. But they are



always waiting for God to do something more for them, when He is expecting them to act upon what He has already done.

The fact is that they have forgotten *their own side of the matter*, in dwelling exclusively upon the view of their own natural helplessness, and on the absolute need of God's assisting grace. These are most essential to understand; but once understood and acted upon, they bring blessed results; and it is for us to see that these results are realized, and brought to daily and hourly practical issues, by the constant exercise of definite personal faith in what God has already done both for us and in us.

We want to make it very clear that, where there is little or no experience of real Rest, or a very broken or uneven experience of it, it is the believer's *own fault*. And moreover, he is not just to settle down in his unsatisfactory experience, admitting, as so many do, that of course it is their own fault, and yet content to let it remain so, from a sort of vague impression that it *must* ever be so. It need not be so. And if it remain so, it is deeply our fault. We are losing, either through ignorance or negligence, what might be ours; and so far we incur *a special guilt*, to say nothing of the reality of

our loss itself, both as to personal happiness which we might experience, and true usefulness which we might exercise around us.

We have written at length upon this subject, because our object in these chapters is not merely to describe the believer's Rest, as a matter of interesting inquiry. We want to be really helpful, in the only *real* sense. We hope to lead our readers along with us into a very blessed religious experience, if they have not entered into it already, or to lead them to a deeper and more permanent enjoyment of it, if they have hitherto known something of its reality. And we are, of course, most anxious to clear the ground as far as we can, and to remove every possibility of falling short of its realization.

With this in view, we have thought such an explanation most necessary. Because in all our future remarks we shall take the same line as is so clearly taken in the sacred writings of the New Testament. We shall suppose, to begin with, that true faith, at all events in its smallest and weakest germ, has been implanted by the Holy Spirit of God in the believer's heart. We shall assume, what is everywhere taught in the New Testament, that the Spirit of God

actually dwells within the believer, as a living Personal Power, for the subjugation of inward evil, and for the production of the fruits of holiness. We shall take it for granted that his will has been renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and although he may feel, and feel sometimes keenly, the inward conflict with temptation and with the 'pleasures of sin' (Heb. xi. 25), which have been definitely renounced, and which need continual resistance, yet we shall assume that his renewed will is decidedly turned towards God and moved by the desire to be holy, as God is holy.

Where this is not so, there is no real conversion to God; and, of course, another method of treatment would be necessary for such souls.

But where this is, however faintly and feebly, really the state of the case, we know how to deal with it. We must explain clearly the nature of faith, and its connection with Rest. We must point faith to its only true Object, and show how Christ is the unfailing source of Rest. We must show the application of faith in Christ to the many aspects of the believer's life.

*Before closing this chapter, we must add one*

word more on the responsibility of the Christian in the matter. We have hitherto spoken in regard to his own inner experience, as it concerns himself only, and his own individual relationship to Christ. A Restless Christian is a reflection of dishonour upon Christ. He appears as one who is just so far wanting in trust. And, considered in himself alone, he stands as one who practically shows that he can only trust Christ up to a certain point which has now been passed; or, in other words, that he has reached a point where he can trust no longer.

But considered in his influence on others, the case is even sadder still. It is the privilege of every true Christian to be a living example, a standing indisputable evidence, of the reality of God's grace. He is like the spy of old, who, having traversed the goodly land, gives his report of it to others who have not yet entered. Some report he *must* give, as others are observing him on every side; and it is so sad, when, through a faltering faith and a consequently defective religious experience, the Christian gives an unfavourable report. Those who might be won over to Christ, did they see a more decided result of religious profession in others,

are hindered from doing so. The salvation of many about us may, humanly speaking, just turn upon this. Thus it becomes, in every sense, a most solemn responsibility to exhibit the power of Divine grace in our own life, by a practical manifestation of the Rest which Christ gives.

## IV.

**Faith, the Secret of Rest.**

THE consideration in our last chapter of the human side of the question, and the consequent responsibility which lies upon us of not only seeking but actually *finding* Rest, opens the way for us now to go into the actual method by which it is to be found and enjoyed as a realized experience.

We shall now proceed to point out that faith is the actual method of finding Rest unto our souls.

This subject we must treat quite generally in the present chapter, leaving the more particular aspects of it till we are considering more in detail various points of Christian experience in which faith will be called into constant exercise.

And this opens up the question as to *what faith really is*. This is a subject which requires very careful consideration, because upon the right understanding of it all enjoyment of

religion entirely depends. We say advisedly, 'the *enjoyment* of religion,' because there are many who are apparently very religious, but they have no enjoyment in it; and the whole secret of their failure is, that they have but a very slender conception as to the nature of faith.

And yet faith, after all, is a very simple thing. It is a condition of mind and heart which, in one way or another, we are constantly exhibiting towards our fellow-creatures, without the slightest mistake as to what it involves. We have to trust to others in a multitude of things every moment of the day, and just so far as we believe them to be trustworthy, we enjoy complete Rest as to the matters which we entrust to them.

And people imagine that religious faith is something entirely different. But, when considered in itself, it is precisely the same. The only difference is, not in the nature of the faith at all, but in the Object upon which it is reposed. Faith in God, when it is really in exercise, is exactly the same attitude towards Him as it is when exhibited towards men; and up to the measure in which it is exercised, it produces the exactly similar result in a complete Rest as to the matters which we entrust to Him.

So many people get into the dark, and have no Rest, because they fail to see this. They imagine that about faith towards God there is something so excessively mysterious, that it is exceedingly difficult to exercise it at all. Now, we do not deny that there is something mysterious about it, as to its first birth in the soul. We believe it to be of God. At the same time, we believe that when He gives it, it is not in reality an entirely new disposition imparted which had no sort of existence before. But it seems rather that by His Holy Spirit He arouses, and gives a right direction to, a moral faculty already existing in us. It is that same power of confiding in another which is innate in every heart, now sanctified and fixed on God, through His own working upon the heart.

The principal difference, then, between religious faith, after it has once been produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart, and ordinary faith, which is by nature, is that the former has God for its object, and refers all its matters to Him, just as the latter centres only upon man.

And as we have seen that the Person of the God-Man Christ Jesus is the Christian's Source of Rest, so the faith which finds and enjoys



the Rest which He promises is the confidence of the heart very simply fixed upon Him, and upon all He is.

But there are some elements which contribute to make faith all that it really is, and to produce the proper results of faith in the heart and life.

First of all, we must realize Christ as a real living PERSON. To some it might seem almost unnecessary to point this out in a book intended for those who profess to believe in the personality of Christ. But to so many believers even He is, reverently speaking, only a religious idea. We must believe that the thoughts of a real personal Being are actually occupied with us, with all we are doing, and with all that concerns us, during each and every moment of our existence.

Then, we must realize our own individuality in His sight and in His thoughts. We are apt to live, as it were, in the crowd before Him, and too easily we may be tempted to imagine ourselves more or less lost in the crowd. But it is our privilege to remember that not only are His thoughts so divinely extensive as to take in every created object at the same time, *but they* are also so marvellously special that

they are concentrated upon each one as individually and separately as if that one were the only one for Him to think about at all. This thought will occur over and over again in application to the details of Christian life ; but we must grasp it carefully at the outset as a fundamental principle which underlies all real faith.

Next, before there can be real faith, there must be a real consciousness of need. Only the helpless can really trust. Self-reliance, resources, schemes, contrivances of our own, must be given up before faith can become a personal matter between ourselves and Christ. All must be put in His hands, and His resources and methods must be carefully sought and followed. When our Lord so touchingly asked His Apostles whether they also would 'go away,' Peter replied at once, '*To whom shall we go?*' They had found out the great secret of trust—that they needed *some one* to whom to turn. The false professors could lightly leave Him, because they had never known their need. But the Apostles could not. To some one they *must* 'go,' even if they left Christ, and this consciousness of need kept them faithful to their Divine Master, when

others were giving up their profession (John vi. 67-69).

Then all that is required to make up true faith, and for which what we have said has prepared the way, is a very simple, yet very personal and definite trusting of ourselves, in every circumstance of spiritual and outward life, to the power, the wisdom, and the love of Christ.

And this ought not to be a difficult matter, when we contemplate the Object upon whom our trust is fixed. Indeed, to fall short of it seems to be most supremely sinful, especially in those who know anything experimentally of Christ at all. And it is so sad to hear professing Christians talking almost complacently of their 'want of faith,' as if it were an interesting and excusable weakness, instead of viewing it in its true light as a positive and most inexcusable sin, and as the fruitful root of all other sins. People speak of their inability to trust Christ, and to rest in the provisions of His wisdom and love, in a way in which they would be ashamed to speak of their want of confidence in a parent, a husband, or a wife. And this ought not so to be.

And these thoughts lead us to a most im-

portant and useful consideration about the *growth* of faith. People say that they want 'more faith,' and pray for it, and wonder that they never seem any the more able to trust. We believe that they might just as well neglect to sustain by food or to exercise the bodily powers which God has given them, and expect to make up for the results of their neglect by prayer for increased bodily strength.

Faith grows by exercising it upon its proper object, just as every other spiritual or moral faculty does. If we want 'more faith,' let us most diligently use what we have got, and we shall find it expanding under every exigency of Christian life. We shall get into the happy experience of the believers at Thessalonica, whose faith 'grew exceedingly' (2 Thess. i. 3).

And the reason for this is very obvious. Once again let us refer to ordinary faith in our fellow-men. How does this grow? Not by self-inspection, but by contemplating the object of our faith, and thus finding out more and more of the resources at his command, or the general trustworthiness of his character.

In a similar way also religious faith grows. We are not to look within and scrutinize our faith, seeking by some increased intellectual

exertion, and with some help, as we think, from God, to increase it. But we must look away from it entirely, and contemplate Christ more and more. And so our faith, simply exercised on its Divine Object, dwelling on His infinite perfection, and finding out increasingly more and more of what *He* is, grows, not by painful and conscious self-effort, but simply by 'considering Him' (Heb. xii. 3 and iii. 1).

And as we remember that faith is the method or means by which Rest is to be found, it will, of course, be very obvious, that it is also the measure of the Rest which we actually experience and enjoy. Rest is found in trust. As we trust, we rest; and just where we cease to trust, we cease to rest. The two are always on the same level; only we must bear in mind that the Rest takes its level from the trust. It cannot be otherwise.

And, when we go down to the very root of the whole matter, we shall find the real secret of the want of Rest of which so many speak. So few exercise *real* trust. They mistake good feelings, good desires, longings after better things, with perhaps some general and indefinite kind of confidence in God, which is easily shaken, for faith. They have yet to learn


that faith is not weakness struggling to be strong, but helplessness leaning with all its weight on Christ's Divine wisdom, power, and love, fully satisfied with all He brings about. This is the faith which finds Rest in the darker scenes of life as well as the brighter—in fact, in all the varied circumstances of our earthly surroundings.

## V.

**Faith in Exercise.**

**A**FTER explaining the exact nature of faith, we now pass on to consider some of the principles which faith, when really in active exercise, is enabled to recognise. And we may say at the outset, in brief, what we hope further on to unfold in detail, that the whole secret of Rest unto our souls lies in the application of these principles to the details of our daily surroundings. Hence it is so absolutely necessary most clearly and fully to understand them.

To some it may seem almost superfluous to say that the first principle which faith in active exercise will recognise is that every word of God is absolutely and divinely true. But this is what we may call the root-difficulty with so many people. Were they *really and without doubt to believe this with their whole hearts*, all the other principles which contribute to produce Rest would follow almost as matters of course.



And a further difficulty in the case of so very many is, that in actual fact, while they do not really and fully accept the absolute truth of every word of God, they somehow think that they do so. Indeed, they would be horrified to be told that there was any promise of God which they did not believe. And very naturally so. But while they think that they believe, they often speak and act, or at all events feel, as if they did nothing of the sort. Still the fact remains that they do not. And the worst of it is, that their horror at the very thought of not implicitly believing God leads them to shrink from the very idea of their not doing so. And it is very difficult to bring them to face their true position with respect to God's word.

At the very best, the faith of many Christians amounts to nothing but a sort of general and passive assent to the truth of God's promises, which produces little or no spiritual results. They could not think the promises were untrue ; and therefore they suppose that, in some way or other not clearly apprehended by them, they *must* be true, although they have never been realized or enjoyed. And so they settle down in this negative kind of apprehension of them, and mistake this for faith.



This we may say, by the way, is the attitude of thousands of merely professing Christians in regard to the truth of the Gospel altogether. They give a general assent to it because they cannot think it untrue ; but here it ends. It produces no real conversion of heart and life. They think that they believe ; but their belief is nothing more than a merely negative and passive assent of the mind to what they cannot disbelieve. They do not act out the truth of what they profess to believe ; and so they are practical unbelievers, even while professing faith.

The same is too often the case with very many who have with more or less reality grasped the more elementary truths of the Gospel about sin and forgiveness, when it comes to those truths which relate to their after experience in the daily Christian life. They enjoy some measure of peace about the guilt of sin, through the blood of Christ. But even this is very wavering ; and with regard to the numberless 'exceeding great and precious promises' which can sustain and comfort in every possible condition of earthly life, they fail to grasp them with any reality. Of course, they regard them as true. They would be exceedingly shocked to have it thought otherwise. But did they

*really* believe them, they would be very different sort of people. There would be a quietness and Rest about them which they seldom or ever exhibit.

We are quite sure that no greater assistance can be rendered, by way of help and encouragement, to wavering, restless Christians, than to expose very clearly the true nature of that shameful compromise between belief and unbelief which too often goes by the name of faith. It is the secret source of all the distressing failure which is everywhere complained of in Christian experience.

We want an active and whole-hearted acceptance of the truth of God's word, an embracing of it with all the powers of our souls. We must get out of the way of regarding it as just not untrue; but apart from our 'feeling' and experience, and whatever these may be, we must receive 'every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' as most thoroughly reliable and absolutely true. A hitherto untried promise must be accepted and acted upon as if we had already tried it and found it true a thousand times over before.

In the light of this view of what real faith is, we must each take our individual place before

God, in respect to His promises. We must regard them as made *for ourselves*, just as if we were each the only one for whom He made them. We must each accept them as made '*for me*,' and remember that they are just as true for the individual believer as for the entire body of believers. Then alone are we able to bring them to bear upon our individual necessities, and so alone can we find Rest unto our souls.

We have dwelt more at length upon this, because everything else depends upon it. Every other principle which faith is called upon to recognise is vitally connected with, and arises out of, what we have already said.

Another most important principle which is recognised by true faith is, that God is the first great Cause of everything. Whatever happens, be it what we call 'good' or even 'evil,' it is either His own direct working, or else His deliberate permission of what, had He thought it best to be otherwise, He could have absolutely prevented. This is a wide statement of a great truth. Every possible circumstance connected with our existence can be brought within its reach; and one of the secrets of faith is to recognise it always; and whatever then be the

condition of our earthly surroundings, we can find Rest in God as the first Cause of all.

One of the great secrets of unrest is to be ever looking to second and intermediate causes—the human agencies through which difficulties and trials come. We fix so much attention upon the wrong-doings of others which we so bitterly feel; upon the particular combination of circumstances which might have been different, but which resulted in some special sorrow, or perhaps overturned our plans, or dashed to pieces our hopes; upon the oversights or mistakes of ourselves or of others which might have been otherwise, but which have occasioned trouble. We are so apt to regard these as if they were the real sources of what we suffer, and to indulge in after-regrets that things were not different to what they were, or that we did not act differently to what we did. Or we suffer ourselves to exhibit hastiness and impatience towards the human instrument which we should never think of exhibiting towards God did we take all directly *from Him*.


But we must look beyond the instruments in God's hands through which He allows trial to reach us. And, however improbable the instruments may appear, as seeming to us so

unfit for Him to use, faith still looks through and above them, and takes everything straight from His hand.

This is a principle which admits of the most extended application to the numberless details of life. It is one which not only removes from all earthly trial its very bitterest sting, by hiding from us what often makes it so hard to bear, but it actually surrounds the sorrows of life with a halo of blessedness and peace. It is one most important secret of Rest, and must at the very outset be most firmly laid hold of, and at all times be most earnestly applied. Any wavering about this will disturb the calm current of Rest.

But this is not all. We might even go as far as this, and then settle down, as so many do, in what may be called a restless acquiescence in surrounding circumstances. What we cannot alter we know must be endured; and it may be some sort of alleviation to believe that it comes direct from God. And we may think that this is all that is meant by Rest. But there is far more than this.

For another fixed principle which true faith will always recognise is, that in His infinite wisdom and tender love, God always does what *is the very best* to be done. This is the neces-



sary result of *real* confidence in Him. Faith produces an assurance that, in all the instruments and means which He may use, God has the highest and happiest aim in view. And to faith in active exercise, His wisdom and love, which are working out such an end, are reflected brightly upon the instruments and means themselves.

'The end of the Lord' (Jas. v. 11) is a remarkable expression. But it was what He had in view in all that He allowed to fall upon Job. And true faith fixes itself in simple confidence upon this 'end of the Lord,' devoting its greater attention to it. But it also heartily accepts meanwhile the steps by which it is being attained. Of every such step, however it may appear at the moment to the outward eye, it is ready to say, with the utmost simplicity of trust,

'God nothing does nor suffers to be done,  
But thou wouldst do thyself, if thou couldst see  
The end of all things here as well as He.'

Faith accepts it as a most real and actual fact, and not only as an admirable theory, that 'all things' *really do* 'work together for good' (Rom. viii. 28). It does not in a general and indefinite way '*suppose* that it must be so,' but as St. Paul

so grandly expresses it, it **KNOWS** that it is. It is able to sing, and to sing it most heartily,

' If all things work together  
For ends so grand and blest,  
What need to wonder whether  
Each in itself is best ?'

Everything may look very dark around us, whether for ourselves personally, or for our family, our friends, our business, our plans, our prospects, or for our country at large. But faith rises above all this, and does more than merely exercise what is called 'resignation,' which is only one, and that the *negative* side of Rest. It also heartily enters into even the gathering cloud, regarding it as the very best method of reaching 'the end of the Lord.' And it *knows* that, sooner or later, either in time or in eternity, when His 'end' is revealed, it will prove Him most unmistakeably and surely to be 'very pitiful, and of tender mercy' (Jas. v. 11).

Another of the great secrets of Rest which only true faith, such as we have already described, can understand, is the habit of referring to God every matter as it arises, before coming to any definite conclusion about it from our own judgment.

We notice how slow Moses was to act upon his own judgment, when he might have drawn his own conclusions and acted accordingly. In the case of the blasphemer, before punishing the offence, he had him put 'in ward,' till God's will should be made known. 'The mind of the Lord' was what he wished to discover before he had any mind of his own (Lev. xxiv. 12). Instances of the same hesitation to take a very decided step until he had consulted God, will be found in Num. ix. 8, xv. 34, xxvii. 5. These should be very carefully noticed.

Then, on the contrary, it is instructive to observe the failure which resulted when Joshua neglected this wise precaution. He was led by outward appearances, or carried away by momentary feelings of pity for their condition, and made peace with the Gibeonites. We are expressly told that counsel was not 'asked at the mouth of the Lord' (Josh. ix. 14).

But so few Christians really carry out the great principle involved here, and so few, of course, find the Rest unto their souls which results from it. We are so apt to form hasty conclusions, and to decide for or against a thing in a moment. We so often rely, in a general way, upon our common sense, sanctified, as we trust it has been,



by the Spirit of God, to settle all at once the questions which arise. We so seldom definitely take each one as it comes, separately and by itself, to God, to endeavour to find out, in communion with Him, and in consultation with His Word, what line we should take up, before we commit ourselves to action, or even to an opinion, one way or another.

And a loss of Rest is, in numberless cases, the certain result. We commit ourselves to a line of action which we afterwards discover to be a mistake, when we calmly review it in the light of God's Word. We enter into arrangements which must either be carried out with an uneasy conscience, or else be broken off with difficulty and unpleasantness. We let our affections go out to people, or places, and then we have eventually to tear them away, when we at last discover the error we have made. Endless complications arise, lasting sometimes a lifetime, and ever longer still, which might have been avoided, had we only first 'asked at the mouth of the Lord.'

It may be that we do not recognise ourselves as stewards and managers for God, and under Him, in every matter connected with earthly life in the same definite way as Moses did. But in *this* we are wrong. Moses was no more respon

sible to God for his management of the special stewardship entrusted to him, than we are for that which is entrusted to us.

Or it is possible that we think the matters in which we are concerned are not important enough to refer to God in every detail of every one of them. In this also we are sadly wrong. True consecration regards those matters which seem to be of little moment as something to be received from God and done for Him, just as much as those which appear more important. In fact, we are unable to judge rightly of the comparative importance of anything. Great results, such even as the conversion of souls, often arise from what appears the most trifling cause. A very little matter may be just the coupling link in the purposes of God between matters of the greatest moment, and in which the deepest interests of heaven are very closely involved. And a really consecrated Christian will regard no matter as too small to be done according to 'the mind of the Lord,' if this can in any way be discovered.

But perhaps the deepest reason of all for the hasty conclusions without reference to His mind, is a latent want of confidence in Him after all. We may hardly like to own it, even

to ourselves, that we hesitate to refer absolutely everything to Him, because we have some secret fear that the result of this will not be favourable to our natural likes and dislikes.

And here we see the necessity for the sort of faith already described, if there is to be the real Rest. There must of necessity be the most unwavering confidence in the provisions of His wisdom, power, and love, or there will of necessity result a want of Rest in leaving all to His direction. Unless we are *absolutely* sure that His way will in very truth be the best for us, we shall most surely have a secret, perhaps, but yet very decided preference for our own way. Until it is really our settled conviction, and not only our theory, that He loves us far more than our dearest earthly friend, and infinitely more than we love ourselves, we shall shrink from an absolute placing of our every plan and interest unreservedly at His disposal.


But in this respect, as in every other, our trust will become the measure of our rest, as we have seen already. Just so far as we have reached the standpoint of *real* faith, we shall find a Rest from the very restlessness of following out our own likes and dislikes in submitting *every matter* that comes before us to Him, in

order to discover, as clearly as may be, what He would have us to do in it.

Then there is another principle which true faith will recognise, and which will, under every possible circumstance, enable the believer to enjoy Rest unto his soul. Under its influence he will be able to enter more fully into much that has been already said, because it not only leads him to trace everything up directly to God, but also to wish nothing altered which He thinks best to happen.

The believer realizes the fact that there is *nothing impossible to faith*. Our Lord has taught us not only that 'with God all things are possible' (Mark x. 27), but also that 'all things are possible to him that believeth' (ix. 23). And this word 'possible' must be understood in both statements in the same way. Absolutely, of course, and in the fullest sense, 'ALL THINGS are possible with God.' He can bring about whatever He determines to do. He 'worketh all things after the counsel of His own will' (Eph. i. 11).

And yet this very statement, in one sense, limits even the possibilities of God. After 'the counsel of His own will' implies no arbitrary and blind exercise of power at His




disposal, but a thoughtful and deliberate employment of His omnipotence, so as to secure the results at which His wisdom and love are always aiming. Nothing that could involve sin or injustice is 'possible with God.' For instance, He 'cannot lie' (Titus i. 2); He 'cannot deny Himself' (2 Tim. ii. 13). Anything which would not be for the ultimate good of His people is impossible to His infinite wisdom and love, although possible, of course, to His power considered in itself.

Let us bring these thoughts to bear upon circumstances which we might for any reason wish to be otherwise than what they are. The very wish in itself is likely to disturb the quiet Rest of the soul; but the constant fretting which mostly results when the wish continues to be unfulfilled, does so in a still greater degree. Under these circumstances it is such a help to remember that there is exactly the same possibility to faith to remove them, as there is to the power of God Himself. Faith grasps God's power, and identifies itself with it. Faith transfers every burden to God, really casting all care *upon Him* (1 Peter v. 7). The really believing soul knows that all His *omnipotence is in exercise* over even its most trifling

matters; but at the same time it willingly trusts itself to all those limitations which we may reverently say that God's wisdom and love place upon His infinite and absolute power.

This is one most necessary and essential element of consecration. The believer knows that if difficulties, sorrows, trials, are not removed, it is not because there is the slightest impossibility, so far as God's power is concerned, in doing it. In the light of this alone it is perfectly possible. He gets into the habit of measuring all his difficulties not beside his own resources, but beside those of God's infinite power, and in one sense he at once ceases to regard them as 'difficulties' at all, just because they are not difficulties to God. But He also knows that, at all events for the time being, there is an impossibility so far as His wisdom and love are concerned. And so the continuation of the trial is accepted no longer as a source of fretting impatience, but positively as itself a source of Rest. It now appears as a direct and special dealing of God, inasmuch as He could remove it were it best to do so; and at the same time it is also taken as the plainest evidence that, in view of His loving wisdom,



there is an impossibility in the matter. And just so far as the believer has learned the lesson of implicit trust, He is able to find Rest unto his soul in the very thick of the trial itself. Thus again faith appears as the exact measure in which Rest is really enjoyed.

## VI.

**Rest from Condemnation.**

**W**E shall now pass on to apply to the special needs of the soul the principles which have been already unfolded. We have not hastened to this application, because it is well to have the foundation thoroughly laid before beginning to build upon it. But now that it has been, we trust, deeply laid, we shall find that it can bear the very utmost strain that we shall ever need to put upon it. In other words, there cannot by any possibility arise a single circumstance in a believer's life that may not be met in quietness of spirit and Rest in Christ.

The special aspect of our subject now shall be the Rest from the condemnation on account of sin which is enjoyed by every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who rightly understands and simply apprehends the Gospel message.



We say thoughtfully, 'who rightly understands and simply apprehends ;' because many believers in Christ do not rightly understand the Gospel, nor do they simply apprehend it. They are believers, without a doubt. But still they do not enjoy Rest unto their souls. They have no hope of salvation but in Christ only ; and as far as they know, they really do trust Him. But they do not understand all that trusting Him involves. They do not see the absolute and perfect safety of every believer in Christ, apart from all feelings or emotions of ours. They are really saved, but they do not seem to know it ; and therefore there is no Rest.

We must carefully distinguish between 'having peace with God' (Rom. v. 1) and that enjoyment of peace which springs from the *conscious* possession of it. Some souls get into the dark about this ; and a clear understanding on the subject very much helps them out of their difficulty.

Nothing so injures the highest interests of some timid souls than the well-meant but ill-judged statements of many believers, to the effect that there is no salvation, unless there is an undoubted consciousness of it. The statement is often made ; but it proceeds from a

misunderstanding of the whole subject. The real way of meeting the difficulty is not to frighten trembling believers—not to 'break the bruised reed,' nor to 'quench the smoking flax'—but to encourage them to a stronger faith, and to help them to a clearer view of Gospel truth.

It is a very common mistake among many zealous, but ill-instructed young Christians, to speak very hastily, and almost flippantly, of some as 'unconverted,' because they do not use the language of the brightest assurance, or because their views of the Gospel, and of the full privileges of the believer, are more or less defective. On the other hand, we believe that it is quite possible to be truly converted to God, turned, that is, to Him, with every power of one's being, and endeavouring to please Him in every way, but yet to have very misty notions as to personal acceptance with God. Indeed, it is just as possible to have the views defective and wrong, while the heart is 'right in the sight of God,' as it is to have the views very correct, while the heart is 'not right' before Him. There are, probably, as many who understand the Gospel very simply, and yet who show by indulgence in sinful habits, or in mere frivolity and worldliness, that they are

not *really* converted, as there are who are really converted, but who have confused notions on simple Gospel truths.

At the same time, we do not say that it is a satisfactory state of things at all, when there is little or no Rest about condemnation or account of sin. It is a condition which ought not to exist, and which, as a matter of fact, ceases to exist the moment the Gospel is really understood and simply believed. Only we must be very careful to notice, that the method of bringing ill-instructed, and therefore anxious and doubting, souls into Rest is not to be harsh and hasty with them, and so to discourage them altogether, as regards their past experience, but in a bright and happy way to point out where it has been defective, 'expounding unto them the way of God more perfectly' (Acts xviii. 26).

Our object in this chapter is to endeavour so to expound the way to God, that those whose knowledge of it is deficient, and who, therefore, have little or no conscious Rest, may see it more perfectly ; and that those who know what it is for themselves may be able to help those who do not, which is also of the greatest importance.

In clearing up the subject, we would say that an uneasy anxiety about the condemnation due to sin is the first experience of the truly awakened soul. It is not experienced by all in the same degree. In some it is most intense and violent ; in others it is more calm and subdued ; in some it is little more than a very gentle impulse, just revealing the need of seeking a refuge, without any very marked emotion of the mind. We cannot altogether account for these differences in the experiences of awakened hearts. It may be to some extent due to the constitutional sensibilities of the individuals concerned, upon which and through which the Holy Spirit is pleased to work. But still the fact exists that it is so, and it is very wrong to disregard it.

Moreover, to recognise this clearly will remove a mistake which hinders many souls from enjoying Rest. They read, perhaps, of the experience of others whose emotions have been very intense ; or they sketch out in their own imagination what they think such emotions *ought* to be. And if they are not conscious of reaching such a standard, they imagine that they must wait for deeper 'feeling' about sin before they can possibly lay hold of Rest.

The Christian worker, too, from inexperience in dealing with souls, or from one-sided views on the subject, very often falls into a sad mistake, which results from losing sight of these differences in individual cases. They imagine that the person whom they are seeking to help is not sufficiently in earnest, if his anxiety of soul does not seem so intense as it is in some people they meet. They think that they must '*deepen* the work,' when it is already as deep as ever it will be in that particular case.

The great remedy for this mistake, whether amongst the anxious themselves, or amongst Christian workers who seek to help them, is to recognise the fact that real anxiety of soul may exist in infinite variety of degrees, from the least to the greatest. The real evidence that the Holy Spirit is working anxiety on account of sin, is any sense of unrest, greater or less, which leads the soul to seek salvation at all, quite apart from depth of emotion or intensity of feeling.

This being so, a state of unrest about the guilt of sin is the right condition of soul which prepares the way for the enjoyment of Rest. Rest, in fact, results from the removal of this *unrest*.

We are, of course, assuming that this point of spiritual experience has been reached, at all events in some degree. And we want now to show how it may be so entirely removed that the result may be the promised Rest.

But we must beware of seeking its removal in any way short of a complete casting of it all upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And as so many really anxious ones, in one way or another, try often for a long time something short of this, and therefore fail to find Rest unto their souls, it may be well to point out briefly some of the mistakes into which they are apt to fall. And we hope that many who are still unrestful about the condemnation due to their sin will recognise their case, and lay hold of the remedy.

Some who are conscious of unrest about sin, seek refuge in an attempt to water down its guilt till it sits more lightly upon them. They persuade themselves that it is not quite so guilty after all. It is a temptation specially satanic, and we must beware of it. We trust, however, that it is not so with any reader of these pages.

Others, who resist this temptation, and in view of God's infinite holiness and justice cannot water down its guilt, sometimes get a temporary relief from the burden by attempting to find an

excuse for themselves. They plead the weakness of their nature, its natural sinfulness, their own peculiar tendencies of mind and body, which bring their special temptations, or else the individual difficulties of their positions in life, all of which they imagine form at least some kind of excuse for their sin. But the relief from these considerations is only temporary.

Others, again, let time *appear* to heal the wound. Time is said to heal the wounds of earthly sorrow, and to a large extent this is true. But some imagine that the same is true of sorrow for sin; and as time goes on, and they get accustomed to the burden, its weight does not oppress them so much as it did at first, and they fancy that this is Rest. But sooner or later the mistake of this appears to them, and they cannot be happy, as they are conscious that the wound, after all, is open still.

Others seek Rest in vigorous efforts at reformation of life. They see the forms of sin in which they have lived, and they make the most earnest and honest attempts at better things. They pray against their special temptations, and strive against them with greater purpose of heart, and often with good results. They seem better than *they were*, and this gives them a sense of relief.

They think that they are trusting to Christ, when in reality they trust only to the fact that they seem to overcome more than they once did. But every fall undoes all the work. The foundation of a better life upon which they were building for the moment gives way, and their sense of relief falls with it. And at last, after years sometimes of weary struggling, they find out their mistake.

Then, again, others seek relief from their heart-burden in a diligent attention to the outside forms of religion. They more frequently attend the means of grace, and especially the Lord's Supper. They attempt some forms of Christian work such as Sunday school teaching or district visiting. These think for a time that they are trusting to Christ, when in reality they are trusting to their form of religion, and possibly for a time, so long as they are satisfied with their religion, they are a little happier. This, however, is sure to come to an end at last. Religion, without real reconciliation to God and conscious forgiveness, is an up-hill, burdensome duty, and no pleasure is found in it. Moreover, there is an uneasy feeling that no amount of it can really remove the condemnation of sin.

But the true way of Rest is more simple, more



speedy, more satisfactory, and more lasting ; and we shall now endeavour to explain it.

We must notice carefully, what has been previously mentioned, that for relief from the burden and guilt of sin our Lord calls 'all that labour and are heavy laden' TO HIMSELF—to no earthly 'priest,' to no system of 'religion' however beautiful, to no doctrines however true, to no contemplation by the sinner of his own personal condition, but just right up to HIMSELF. He puts no reformation of life or religious observances between the sinner and HIMSELF. These things come afterwards in their proper place ; but some put them first, between themselves and Christ, and therefore in their wrong place. Nothing can effect the sinner's salvation but a simple and true-hearted turning to the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself. It must be Christ first for salvation, apart from any reformation or religion, and then comes true religion and reformation as the only proper life of the saved soul. Let it be clearly understood that reformation and religion are to be reached through Christ, and not that Christ is to be reached through these.

But there must be a *real* coming to Him. *Were He still upon earth, visible to our eyes, we*

should have no difficulty whatever in so coming. We should simply go up to Him, and, presenting ourselves in His presence, we should tell Him in the very simplest language, and probably in very few heartfelt words, that we put ourselves entirely into His hands as a Saviour, and that we trusted Him implicitly to save us to the end.

But the fact that He is invisible to the natural eye puts no difficulty in the way of real faith. Indeed, 'seeing Him who is invisible' (Heb. xi. 27) is one of the marks of a true faith. Faith knows that He is ever present; that the softest prayer is breathed into His very heart. And so the coming unto Him may be just as real as if He were actually visible to the outward eye. Faith knows that He hears, and answers graciously every soul that turns to Him.

So many fall short of Rest because they have never really had a personal, definite, and conscious dealing with the Person of Christ, such as this. They have prayed for forgiveness and acceptance, in a general sort of way, without the least consciousness afterwards of any relief from the burden. But their mistake is this—that, while they have over and over again asked for His forgiveness, they have never really put themselves trustfully into His hands, as the sick

one entrusts himself entirely to the physician, or as the sea captain puts his ship most confidently into the hands of the pilot.

But, again, there are many who are conscious of such a personal transaction with Christ, and yet they have no Rest. Over and over again, they have put themselves, as they have thought at the time, into His hands; and still they are as uneasy as ever. They say they have 'come unto God by Him,' but they would not speak of themselves confidently as 'saved,' although we are distinctly told that 'He is able to save them to the uttermost' who so come (Heb. vii. 25). The whole root of the failure in this case is simply unbelief. He says, 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out' (John vi. 37). But, after coming to Him, as well as they know how to do it, and with all sincerity of heart, they still venture, or rather we should say, still dare, to doubt whether He has really received them or not.

There must be no hesitation on this point. It is just where faith is really called into exercise, not merely in a general way, but as a personal and individual connecting link between the soul and Christ. After a sincere and single-hearted *coming unto Him*, the question is no longer an

open one to real faith, as to whether He has received or not—*of course He has*. It is not a matter of our own emotional feeling, but of the truth and reality of His own word. Whether we 'feel' it, as some call it, or not, it is most absolutely and divinely true.

The language of faith, after such a coming to Christ, is simply this, '*Of course*, He has received me, and I am His; not because I feel different to what I did before, but just because He said that He would.' And every rising question on the subject must be settled, not by any appeal to whether we *feel* it or not to be true, but by a triumphant '*OF COURSE HE HAS*, because He says so.'

When this secret of faith has been learned, then comes such a blessed Rest about acceptance and forgiveness. Forgiveness follows upon acceptance. None can be 'not cast out'—that is, 'received,' and remain unforgiven. Acceptance is the first link in the grand chain, and everything else comes as a necessary and glorious consequence.

Then, too, is understood in all its beautiful reality the individuality of personal Salvation. That Christ 'died for all' is most blessedly true (2 Cor. v. 15); but it is equally true that He

died for each, as really as if that one was the only one for whom He died. If He 'loved the Church, and gave Himself for it' (Eph. v. 25), the individual believer, however weak and imperfect, may triumphantly exclaim, for it is equally true, 'He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*' (Gal. ii. 20). He may change every general expression into a particular one, every plural into a singular. His language is, 'Christ died for *my* sins' (1 Cor. xv. 3); 'Who His own self bare *my* sins in His own body on the tree' (1 Pet. ii. 24); and he can make a similar use of every other such statement as these.<sup>1</sup>

We must close this chapter by very briefly pointing out a few of the many blessed features of the Rest thus attained.

1. There is such an absolute *certainty* about it. It is no longer a matter of our own feelings and experiences, or anything that we are, but just *what Christ is*. It is a question of the truth and reality of His Word. The one that has

<sup>1</sup> It would be a useful Bible exercise to hunt out and write down all the texts in the New Testament which the believer may use in this way, with the alteration actually made. A list of them would be an unspeakable comfort to *many*. It should be kept for constant reference.

come unto Him may *know* that he is accepted and saved.

2. The attainment of Rest is *immediate*, however deep and long-continued the sins. It is not worked into by slow degrees, but just entered upon the moment there has been a real and trustful coming unto Christ.

3. It is such a soul-satisfying Rest. The one who comes unto Him has no need to water down his guilt, or to excuse it. He can view it in the light of God's holiness and justice, as 'exceeding sinful' (Rom. vii. 13). But this does not disturb his Rest. He knows that Christ has met it, in all its awful guilt, upon the Cross, and paid to Divine justice the last farthing of its tremendous claim against the sinner. Faith believes that God is satisfied with what Christ has done; that the claim of His justice is also satisfied; and so the once guilty conscience of the believer is thankfully and restfully satisfied also. Trusting in the precious blood, he knows the meaning of an heart 'sprinkled from an evil conscience' (Heb. x. 22). He knows that Christ has 'put away sin' for him 'by the sacrifice of Himself' (Heb. ix. 26).

4. It is such a *changeless* Rest, just because it has its foundation upon 'Jesus Christ, the same

yesterday, to-day, and for ever' (Heb. xiii. 8). All that He was, when actually hanging on the Cross, He still is to-day; and all that He is to-day He will be for ever. All through eternity, when His ransomed ones shall be 'ever with the Lord' (1 Thess. iv. 17), He will be no more, although visible to their adoring gaze, than He is now; and simple, childlike faith delights to think so. The trusting soul is just as safe now as ever it will be :

' More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in heaven.'

And whenever there is a special consciousness of guilt in one who has so come unto Christ, either because of former sins, or on account of fresh guilt contracted, the coming unto Him, done in one sense once for all, may be and should be repeated. Daily and hourly, and at any moment, there may be the same personal dealing with Him about sin committed. He ever liveth to make intercession for His people (Heb. vii. 25), because they ever need it. He is the 'Advocate with the Father,' the constant and unfailing 'propitiation for our sins,' in case 'any man sin' (1 John ii. 1, 2). And the *consciousness* of guilt should not be allowed for

one moment to rest on the believer's heart. Immediately it is discerned, that very moment there should be the coming unto Christ with it, in one upward glance of faith, even amidst the turmoil of the most busy life. And that very moment to faith the cleansing may be just as conscious as the guilt was before, because it is just as real. And so the Rest remains as undisturbed as ever.



## VII.

**Rest in Temptation.**

**A**FTER describing at length the Rest enjoyed from the present condemnation on account of sin through a simple coming unto Christ, it seems necessary, in the next place, to point out the Rest which is enjoyed with regard to the future, in the believer's consciousness of *continued* acceptance before God in Christ.

There are many to whom this part of our subject is a constant source of anxiety and unrest. They see clearly how it stands as regards the past between God and themselves. They understand that, on coming to Christ, they are there and then received by Him, and that the past is entirely forgiven. But then there is the consciousness of personal weakness, and the knowledge that temptations of various sorts beset their path; and although there is *Rest* with respect to the past, and perhaps also

to the immediate present, there is much unrest in view of the future.

Is it all going to last? is the anxious inquiry of many a young believer: Is the Rest I enjoy at the present moment to be an abiding experience, or is it to pass away 'as a morning cloud, and as the early dew' (Hos. vi. 4)? Shall I have, as time goes on, after all, to describe my case in such words as these:

'What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill!'

We do not wonder in the least that such gloomy forebodings should tincture even the present moment with anxiety and fear, and quickly rob the future of all true Rest.

But to all questions of this sort, we answer, without the slightest hesitation, that the Rest may be in every case an abiding, and, indeed, an ever-deepening, experience. We would most earnestly encourage all who have taken the first step of coming simply to Christ, and who have, in the belief that He has received them, found Rest unto their souls for the present moment, to expect most confidently that it will always

be so with them. Only it is most necessary clearly to understand how this is to be.

And first, with regard to the continued acceptance of those who come to Christ. This is a most glorious reality, as we shall see by reference to another statement by our Lord on the same subject in John vi. 37: 'All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'

Here it appears that coming to Him at all, in the real sense of so doing, is in itself the surest token that the one who so comes has been already given by the Father to Christ. And then in the latter part of the verse we see that this fact is the guarantee not only of a first acceptance, but of final preservation.<sup>1</sup> The words, 'I will in no wise cast out,' are seldom taken in their fullest sense. They are too often referred only to the *first* approach to Christ, and made to mean only that, at the moment of

<sup>1</sup> This fact of their being His *Father's gift* to Christ is the guarantee of the perfect safety of His 'sheep,' in John x. 29. See also our Lord's sevenfold allusion to the same fact in His prayer for His people recorded in John xvii., especially noticing the twice repeated connection between the *gift* and the *keeping*, in verses 11 and 12.

first coming to Him, there shall be no casting out. This is only part of the truth, and leaves the future in terrible uncertainty.

But the real meaning is far deeper than this. In the original language, the negative is doubled to make it specially emphatic. But more still. Our Lord goes on (verses 38, 39) to declare the Father's will concerning each of those who have been thus given to Him, and who have trustfully come to Him. He is to *lose nothing* of His Father's gift, and is 'to raise it up again at the last day.'

And then He so plainly sums up the whole case in the most simple words, 'This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up again at the last day' (verse 40). Thus he joins together the believing, the having everlasting life, and the raising up at the last day, as golden links in one inseparable chain. He not only bestows eternal life, but He undertakes the safe keeping of each who come to Him unto 'the last day.' Nothing short of this is to be understood by His words, 'I will in no wise cast out;' and this is the privilege of every one who comes to Him.

This, however, is what we may call the divine side of the matter. We must also glance at the human side.

The consciousness of one's own personal weakness, of the power of temptation, and of the reality of Satan's influence, is very apt to cast down the believer who is beginning to enter into the experience of Rest; and many thereby are led almost to give up as hopeless the expectation of a permanent and abiding Rest.


The first great mistake is, that they *start discouraged*; and this is the fruitful source of future failing. Experience will seldom or never rise above the level of expectant anticipation; and this expectant anticipation will never, of course, rise above the level of actual faith. Once start believing that Rest must sooner or later be shaken and lost, and such a result will only be a question of time. Encouragement is the secret of perseverance; expectation is the prelude to victory.

A mistake, arising from a totally different source, but equally deplorable in its results, is to ignore the reality of the danger. In the earlier experiences of conversion, when forgiveness is consciously received, and the heart

seems bound by an alienable love to God, it is a common temptation with some to think that the world around has lost its charm, and that the flesh within has been robbed of its power, and that Satan has no longer any prospect of success with them. Such people, sooner or later, find out their mistake by the teaching of bitter experience.

But the secret of true and abiding Rest is not to under-estimate the dangers within and around us, but rather to face them in all their reality, and at the same time to review the ample resources provided for meeting them.

There is no doubt that the Christian is hedged on all sides with dangers. The New Testament is full of teaching on the subject. The old man, the flesh, the sinful nature, whatever we like to call it, still exists in the regenerate, and needs constant watchfulness and opposition. Exhortations to avoid every sort of sin, even in the worst forms, are everywhere addressed, not to the unconverted, but to the believer. These only show the possibility of his falling in one way or another into sin. The warning that our 'adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour,' is addressed to true believers ;



and upon them the exhortations, 'Be sober, be vigilant,' 'resist stedfast in the faith,' are plainly enforced (1 Pet. v. 8, 9).

Temptation is a very real thing to a child of God, and often all the more so, just *because* He is a child of God. And over and above the daily temptations common to all, there are those *special* ones peculiar to each. What would be no temptation to one, is a very strong temptation to another, owing to different constitutional tendencies, and especially to previous habits of indulgence. The direction in which sin was most freely indulged before conversion becomes afterwards an avenue of most frequent temptation. And each one should carefully bear it in mind. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

It is a frequent difficulty with young Christians to think that it is not right with them because they can still find pleasure in what they know to be wrong. They wonder whether this could possibly be if they were really Christians, and are tempted to doubt their conversion. A few plain words about this may help many to retain their Rest of soul when in danger of losing it.

Temptation is an appeal to the gratification

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either of purely bodily sensations or of mental faculties. These bodily sensations, which are simply the result of our physical sensibilities, are as capable of enjoying what can give them pleasure in a believer as in one who is not converted. The same is true of mental faculties. These have their sources of pleasure; and the fact that their sources of pleasure involve sin does not remove the possibility of their giving enjoyment to those mental faculties which can enjoy them, even in converted people.

For instance, that mental faculty which finds gratification in music can find pleasure in it, after conversion, and could, in one sense, enjoy the worldly concert or opera, or the frivolous song. That faculty which enjoys the imaginative, or the sensational, or the exciting, or the gay, is still capable of enjoying, in a certain and real sense, the theatrical performance, the novel, the dance, or the bazaar. It is no use to deny that 'the pleasures of sin' are very real, and that to 'enjoy' them is as possible to a believer as it might have been to Moses (Heb. xi. 25).

Real conversion does not consist in the absolute rooting out of all that could make sin a pleasure to the bodily senses or mental faculties.




It is the planting in of a higher and spiritual faculty, which enables us to see sinful pleasures in their true light, and in the power of a renewed mind to renounce and resist them, not because we could find no pleasure in their enjoyment, but because we desire to keep ourselves for the service of our Lord.

Conversion exhibits itself not in an impossibility to find pleasure in sin, so far as purely bodily or mental faculties are concerned, but in the denial of sinful pleasures, and in the preference for those which are at God's right hand for evermore.

And when we view it in this light, the pressure of temptation does not appear as a reason for doubting our conversion. It is rather the reverse. The very fact that now we have such a conflict about it, shows that the sinful pleasure, which before conversion would have been indulged in without a thought, is now met and opposed by the higher and spiritual faculty implanted at conversion.

And these thoughts go further to show us that, even where there has been a yielding to the pressure of temptation, sad as it is, and needing humiliation of soul and confession before *God as it does*, there is no real reason to doubt



the reality of conversion. Its reality then exhibits itself in the conscious need of such humiliation and confession. The subject here becomes especially difficult to handle; and it must not be thought that we allow the very least licence to sin. But the fact remains, that while God's people ought to 'sin not' (1 John ii. 1), they too often actually do sin, and constantly need the cleansing of the precious blood.

These thoughts will, we trust, be a help to many, encouraging them in a sincere Christian profession. But, at the same time, they show the danger to which the Christian is constantly exposed, and which it is so necessary not to underrate. They reveal the need of earnest watchfulness.

We must ever remember that side by side with the Divine aspect of the Christian's safety, which is expressed in such words as 'kept by the power of God,' we find the human side 'through faith' (1 Pet. i. 5). While it is, of course, divinely true that God keeps the trusting soul, yet it is equally true that 'he that is begotten of God *keepeth himself*, and that wicked one toucheth him not' (1 John v. 18).

It is very true that trusting is the first great

secret of Rest, and lies at the root of all ; but none the less important, in the second place is a careful watchfulness over self and all our surroundings. No amount of trusting can ever take the place of this. And many quickly lose their Rest, as the result of the mistake, that they only trust, there is no need for anything else.

While, then, we start with a confident expectation of continued Rest, let us be very careful that we do not ignore the dangers of temptation. But as we bring ourselves to face our danger, let us grasp, personally and individually for ourselves the numberless promises of God to meet our case. Taking only one of these we turn to 1 Cor. x. 13. After the solemn warning, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (ver. 12), the apostle goes on to show that falling is not a necessity of the case, although it is a sad possibility. He writes : 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'

*Here we are taught, firstly, that God ex-*

cises a restraining power over our temptations and over our Tempter, allowing no temptation to fall upon us above what we can bear ; and secondly, that He Himself '*with* the temptation'—not before it, or too soon ; not after it, or too late, but just at the very right moment—makes a way of escape for us.

While, therefore, we prepare for temptations, and watch against them, never let us gloomily anticipate them, or perplex ourselves as to how we should stand were they to come. As we cannot borrow beforehand 'the way of escape,' which comes '*with* the temptation,' we must not let the temptation itself cast its shadow before it upon a fearful soul. But rather let us go trustfully and confidently forward, knowing that each temptation will surely bring with it the fulfilment of the promise ; and that God will, at the right moment, give us the grace we need, while we wait upon Him expectantly for it.

And whenever temptation actually presents itself, let us remember Christ's gracious invitation, 'Come unto Me.' Let us at once individually, personally, consciously, and definitely bring it to Him ; and we shall find Rest unto our souls, even under the burden itself, in the secret of His presence.

He Himself knows the weight of temptation, having been 'in all points tempted like as we are' (Heb. iv. 15), and 'in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted' (Heb. ii. 18). And not only is He 'able,' but He *does* 'succour.' When we come unto Him for it, 'the way of escape' is found to be ready at hand. The thoughts become occupied with Him, and diverted from the besetment which took us to His feet; and that alone is enough to stem the tide of the fiercest temptation. But more than this. It is wonderful to notice how often He sends 'the way of escape,' just at the right moment, as we really watch for it. Something happens, some one comes in, the outward surroundings are suddenly altered, and we find the force of temptation gone. And all this, over and above the actual communication of His own grace and strength, enabling us to overcome.

But wherever there may be the consciousness that, through a failure either in faith or watchfulness, there has been a yielding to temptation of any sort, for however brief a moment, let there be an immediate coming unto Him, even with our newly-contracted guilt, as we pointed

out at the close of the last chapter. No sense of discouragement under failure, or of self-reproach on account of our misuse of His grace, must hinder our hearing His tender, loving call, 'Come unto Me.'

He is 'a *merciful*' as well as 'a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people' (Heb. ii. 17). However aggravated the fall, however inexcusable, however repeated, let us come unto Him with it. He can understand us better than we understand ourselves. He knows all the secret and winding paths which led up to our fall. He can unravel all the tangled threads which appear to us such a hopeless mass of confusion. Moreover, He can understand us, when all about us misunderstand and misconstrue our actions. He sees the desire in our hearts to do His will, even though, for any reason, we have failed in our endeavour to accomplish it. He will often give us credit for sincerity, when men will give us none. He knows all the errors of judgment by which we approached the brink over which we fell. While we 'make no allowance' for ourselves, we may be sure that, if any allowance can possibly be made for us, He will do it. And even if this

cannot be, we may remain assured that we commit our case, inexcusable as it is, to the merciful judgment of a Saviour who is the very embodiment of love. And we can fall back upon the grand assurance that, if 'while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,' 'MUCH MORE then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him' (Rom. v. 8, 9). And conscious of the forgiveness which follows upon confession of sin, let us confidently apply to ourselves the words of the Psalmist, 'Return unto thy Rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee' (Ps. cxvi. 7).

## VIII.

*Rest in Anxiety.*


**W**E have hitherto confined our attention to the believer's Rest about his standing before God in Christ, both as to its first commencement and also as to its permanent continuance. But Rest from condemnation on account of sin, and from fear of ultimately falling short of final salvation, does not by any means exhaust the subject before us. It admits of an almost endless variety of application. It embraces, we may safely say, every need of the human heart. Offered as it is by the Searcher of hearts, who knows full well our every heart need, we may be sure that no single burden is beyond its reach.

But many lose so much of its wondrous comfort and support by confining it, at all events so far as their practical enjoyment of it is concerned, only to sin. The result of this is, that we find a large number of Christians who



enjoy Rest from condemnation on account of sin; but their Rest goes little or no further. They can talk happily about forgiveness of sins, and about their own standing and acceptance before God, and of their confidence that by His power they will be kept to the end. But then there is a sad restlessness about almost everything else. They are anxious, easily worried, and fretful in the varied details of daily life. They would be horrified at the idea of doubting the promises about forgiveness of sins and personal acceptance, after coming to Christ. But somehow they fail to connect the coming to Christ with all the numberless anxieties of earthly life.

The reason for this seems to be, that they see more need of Christ for the one burden than for the other. Their consciousness of guilt and of their liability to temptation seem to drive them of necessity to Christ, in order to find relief from what He is on their behalf. But the manifold perplexities of their lives do not seem to present the same absolute necessity for taking them just as definitely to Him. These are not so readily connected in the mind with the Person of Christ as the weight of heart-*condemnation* about sin, and the need of grace



to overcome. Because Christ *is* a Saviour for 'His people from their sins' (Matt. i. 21), they overlook all that He is *besides*; and consequently they almost entirely confine their dealings with Him to the one subject for which they seem to need Him most.

But in reality there is no limit to the believer's need of Christ, just as, thank God, there is no limit to Christ's resources for supplying the needs of those who come unto Him. His gracious invitation is a very open one. No special class of burdens, spiritual or temporal, is named. 'All ye that labour and are heavy laden' includes also all who are conscious of forgiven sins, but who are weighed down by the pressure of life's varied forms of anxiety.

We do not hesitate to say that the Rest from anxiety, of every conceivable form, to be found by the believer who comes unto Christ, is just as real and deep and abiding as the Rest about condemnation and final preservation.

Rest from anxiety, then, shall be the branch of our subject now.

Anxiety is a very widespread burden of the human heart. None but those of the most tender years are free from its ravages in some

form or another. The young have their form of anxiety, more or less special to themselves and they are just as real to them as the anxiety of older persons. But as life opens out, with all its realities of trial and possibilities of sorrow, anxiety makes itself keenly felt in all who allow it to oppress them. It is confined to no one class more than another. The rich, surrounded with every outward comfort, and the poor, who have to work hard for the very necessities of life, with every degree between them, are all alike liable to their peculiar anxieties. Moreover, the avenues of its approach to the human heart are so many and varied, and at times so unsuspected.

This being so, it will be obviously impossible to enter much into detail in dealing with the subject. Nor is there any need for it. Whatever be the special source of the anxiety, it must be dealt with upon exactly the same principle as that springing from any other source whatever.

Indeed, the actual source of the anxiety is of comparatively very little importance; for anxiety, after all, is not so much a question of the actual cause which calls it into existence, as of the *habitual state* of the mind which allows it to

exist at all. Anxiety, we mean, is rather a condition of mind at any time liable to be excited; and to treat it properly we must deal with the condition of the mind itself, and not with the causes which excite it, which may vary almost infinitely.

And here it will be well to define very carefully what we mean by anxiety, as it is possible to make a mistake about it. The word does not occur at all in the English version of the Scriptures, but is of very common occurrence in everyday language. From its derivation it means, first of all, a choking by pressure on the neck; and then it came to mean a troublesome pressure of any kind; and so it gets the meaning, commonly assigned to it, of perplexity or distress of mind. It is the exact opposite of Rest. The one of necessity excludes the other.


But we must not mistake for anxiety certain dispositions of the mind which are perfectly consistent with the enjoyment of Rest. To make the subject clear, these must be explained.

For instance, we may have a keen interest in what is happening, or in what is about to take place, either as regards ourselves or others, without the least approach to anxiety. The Rest promised by our Lord is not attained by

a cold indifference to what is going on. A true Christian cannot be passively indifferent about anything. He regards events as being indications of God's providential government, and himself as being God's agent or instrument in carrying out the Divine counsels ; and naturally this view invests with the deepest interest even apparently trivial matters. But with all this interest there need not be the smallest anxiety of mind.

Nor are we to regard as anxiety the strong desire which every Christian must have to do the very best it is possible to do in all the various contingencies of life. We ardently wish to do the right thing at the right time, so as to further God's counsels and plans to the utmost of our ability. When we believe ourselves to be acting in the direction of God's will, whatever be the actual thing which we are seeking to accomplish, we shall naturally wish to do it thoroughly well, and to bring it to a successful issue. But all this may be experienced to the full, and yet may be accompanied by the most undisturbed Rest.

Neither are we to regard as anxiety the rightful provision to meet future wants. We may lay *up as far as possible* for families, and provide



for all our well-known future needs of any sort. God, who works almost everything through means, uses no doubt our care and forethought as His own instruments in providing for those dependent on us. In this way we are His agents. But all this may be done without the very smallest anxiety or want of Rest.

Nor must we include under the head of anxiety any desire, however strong, that events may turn out in any particular direction. There is nothing sinful in having our preferences and hopes in accordance with what we believe to be best. But this turns into sinful anxiety, when we do not feel able with equal confidence in God to accept a different result, should it eventually be so.

Neither are we to mistake for anxiety that real feeling for the trials of those about us which Christian sympathy will always prompt. Christian life can never be free from this. Christ's earthly life never was ; nor even now is His heavenly life. Sympathy is Christ-like in the deepest sense, and is consistent with the promised Rest.

But anxiety, properly considered, goes beyond this keen interest in what is going on, this strong desire to do the right thing, and this

real feeling for the trials of others. It is a condition of mind which allows these natural feelings to pass over into worry and perplexity. Anxiety begins the moment there ceases to exist that calm, implicit trust in God, which knows that His ways are best, and that all our needs are His care. And in order to consider it in all its bearings, we must point out that it may have relation either to the past, the future, or the present.

As regards the *past*. It generally takes the form of worrying because things were not different to what they actually were, and of imagining what much better results would have followed had they only been so. A moment's reflection reveals, of course, the utter *uselessness* of these after-regrets. They cannot alter, in the least degree, what has taken place. But the *sinfulness* of allowing them to work in the mind is what we wish to urge, because it is totally subversive of all Rest.

Granting, even, that we are now suffering from the result of palpable mistakes, either of ourselves or of others, the moment we come unto Christ with this burden, we find Rest. Faith still trusts Him, that He allowed even *the mistake* to take place, either because it

would best accomplish the plans He has in view, or else because it would the better promote His own glory in the end, by His manifestly overruling the mistake for good. It is such a short-sighted view to suppose that God does not use our 'mistakes,' as we call them, as well as what we consider our 'right steps.' Indeed, it is not easy at all to determine what really was a 'mistake;' only we are apt to call by this name all that does not turn out as we hoped it would. But simple trust will find abiding Rest from all such conflicting thoughts.

No less useless and sinful than anxiety about the past is that which centres so often round the *future*. Some are continually troubled about trials which they imagine are going to take place. A more or less undefined dread of future difficulties and sorrows robs the present moment of all peace and Rest. Very often difficulties, which never actually come to pass at all, are permitted to assume a reality in the mind. People allow themselves to live in the anticipation of future trials. Whether these trials are actually to take place at last, or are wholly imaginary, matters little. The purely imaginary ones beget just as much anxiety as



those which eventually take place. But those who anticipate troubles of any sort from the future cannot anticipate the grace to bear the trial. This always comes *with* the trial itself, and not *before* it; and so they can never enjoy Rest unto their souls. The secret of Rest from anxiety as to what *may* happen is to come unto Christ with it. We must trust HIM with the whole weight, and leave it confidently in His hands, knowing of the future that

‘It can bring nothing with it,  
But He will bear us through.’

And then as to the *present*. With this, of course, we have really more to do than with the past or the future. And it is one of the saddest results of living in constant contemplation of the past, or anticipation of the future, that it paralyzes all the mental and spiritual energies which ought to be expended on the present moment, in which we really live. Indeed, one secret of a truly happy, restful life, is to live only in the present moment. If anxiety could be right and reasonable anywhere at all, it would be in respect to this. But here it is no less useless and wrong. It is useless, *because it can never remove*, although it can

easily increase, the weight of present trials; and because no amount of it can show us the right course to pursue, although even a slight degree of it may often obscure our judgment and cause us to err. It is sinful, because it betrays a want of trust. And we cannot too clearly see that such want of trust in God is not an excusable weakness, but a positive sin.

The only real remedy for present anxiety is to heed our Saviour's gracious call, 'Come unto Me.' We must take it to Him, and confidently leave it in His hands. While we do what commends itself to our sanctified judgment in every matter before us, trusting Him to guide us step by step, and to make 'all things work together for our good,' we shall be able, even in what seem the darkest hours, to 'find Rest.'

But the coming unto Christ with these burdens of earthly care must be just as definite and real as the coming to Him with the guilt of sin. We must not rest satisfied in any merely intellectual grasping of truths about His 'caring for us.' These must lead us up to the Person<sup>1</sup> of Him who so really cares for us. In all that

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter on 'Christ, the Source of Rest.'

causes anxiety, we must look above the second causes,<sup>1</sup> ready to receive all *from* Him; and then we must just as really take it all right up *to* Him. We must fall back upon all that *He is*—upon His wisdom in arranging or allowing our trial, upon His love in measuring it exactly to the grace which He will give us to bear it, as we trust Him, and upon His power to remove it, if and when He will. Then at His feet will be found the Rest which He promises to give.

And this must be so with the lesser sources of anxiety, just as much as with the greater ones. Some can and do really connect the latter with Christ, and see the need of bringing them to Him. But they let the lesser ones work sad havoc with them. They seem so trivial, hardly worth taking to Christ. And yet His invitation is not limited to heavier burdens, while the lesser ones are left out.

Indeed, the little anxieties are just what so much need to be taken to Him. And this for two reasons. Firstly, because of their very frequent occurrence. The life of most people is made up of these, far more than the greater ones. Those who wait for heavier burdens may wait a long time, while the lesser ones are

<sup>1</sup> See page 52.

constantly disturbing the calm flow of their Rest. And, secondly, because they afford such constant occasion for that communion with Christ in which lies the real strength of Christian life and character.

And when all the sources of anxiety, great or small, arising from every source, whether from business, domestic, or personal causes, are really and definitely brought to Christ, and trusted with Him, we shall find that life is eased of all its worrying and wearing friction. It is not so much the work, but the worrying about it, that wears people out, and destroys both health and happiness. A calm restful confidence will spread over the soul, and this will exercise its quiet soothing influence over the outward bodily life, striking all around that there is something very real about the power of Christ to give Rest to those who trust Him.

## IX.

**Rest in Trials.**

THE subject which we propose now to consider is by no means the same as the one which occupied the previous chapter. By anxiety we understood a certain uneasy condition of mind, in view of past, present, or future possible troubles. It refers rather to what *may* or *may not* result from present circumstances. It centres round *possibilities* rather than actual events. And if it arises from trials actually existing, it is more in regard to what is to result from them, than to the spirit in which to bear the actual trials themselves.

To make the matter quite clear, we will take an illustration of our meaning. A person incurs a heavy loss of property ; he loses, perhaps, his all. He may rebel against the trial, and say hard things of the love of God. This, of course, would be clearly wrong. Or, without actual rebellion of spirit, he may resign himself to the

trial, and bear it with some show of patience. But better still, he might cheerfully accept it as from God, knowing it to be His will ; and he might even rejoice in it, considered in itself, as God's dealing with him. This would be Rest in the trial.

But still anxiety might remain. Such a one might at the same time trouble himself considerably as to how to provide for the future, or as to possible further results of his loss. This would be anxiety. And the case we have supposed will enable us to see clearly the distinction between that want of Rest as to the acceptance of the trial itself, which we should call rebellion of spirit against it, and want of Rest as to its possible results, which would be, strictly speaking, anxiety. In a word, there might be a whole-hearted and cheerful acceptance of the trial, and yet there might be anxiety as to its results. And we may also point out that whatever be the actual nature of the trial, the same distinction will exist.

Our subject now is that Rest amidst trials and sorrows which result from such a right view of them as produces a ready acceptance of the burden. Leaving, then, the subject of anxiety as to possible troubles, we are to consider the

believer's position under the actual blow of trial itself. And it will be our aim to suggest some thoughts on the subject of trials which may lead tried souls to the enjoyment of Rest.

A great deal of that want of Rest under trials which is so painful to experience and so sad to observe among Christians, is the result of a want of definiteness in dealing with them. There is too much vague generality in viewing them. The view taken of them may be right in the main, or even wholly correct; but then the lessons of the trial may be imperfectly learned, or not learned at all, and the benefits to be gained from it may be imperfectly gained, or not gained at all, from the mere vagueness with which they are viewed by us.

People are too apt, in a general way, to say that *of course* all trial is for their good, and yet to get no good from it, just from the matter-of-course way in which they view it.

There are two very different ways even of meeting all the promises of God's word with an '*of course* it is so;' and it is very possible to mistake the one for the other.

There is the restless sitting down under the trial, enduring it just because it cannot possibly be altered, with an '*of course* it must be for my

good'—as if the blessings which result from trials force themselves upon us, without any intelligent, spiritual effort on the part of our sanctified reason. This method is very common, and seems to many so plausible, just because they are always ready to say, that *of course* there must be blessing in the trial. But it altogether fails to produce the blessing, from the indefiniteness with which it accepts it. And such people go on talking of the blessing of trials, although in actual experience they would not be able to point it out in their own case.

But better than this, there is the method which arises from a sanctified determination to find out the lessons of the trial, to look for the blessings it should bring, and to learn the one and enjoy the other. Such people do not suppose that real spiritual blessing comes of itself, without spiritual activity in dealing with the trial. Their '*of course* it is so,' leads them to *see* that it is so, and not to be satisfied with any other result.

Our first counsel, then, to tried souls is that they take *nothing as a matter of course*. They must brace themselves up to a holy determination that, by the teaching of the Spirit






of God, their trials *really shall* be sanctified to them.

And further, we would say that Rest under trials is not to be reached by underrating the weight of the sorrow, or trying to steel ourselves against it. With some this is a simple impossibility. Their natural character refuses to rise above a trial. They brood upon it, till its intensity literally seems greater even than it actually is. They lie fully exposed to its blow; and until time either removes it, or accustoms them somewhat to its weight, they simply sink under it. Others again, from mere natural character, rise above it. They refuse to face it in all its fulness. A natural strength of mind controls the thoughts; and they do not brood over it. They have the happy disposition of seeing a bright side to it; and they are not so crushed by it as others would be. But all this may be apart from grace.

The advantage of the Rest unto our souls which Christ promises to those who come unto Him for it under the weight of trials is this, that it is quite independent of what we call natural character. It is for the weakest mind as much as for the strongest. It is quite inde-



pendent too of the actual weight of the sorrow. It is equally for the least as for the greatest, and for the greatest as for the very least—it is for all. It is also quite independent of the eventual removal of the trial. The Rest which is found in its beginning will last as long as the trial itself. The trust which first accepted it will continue to accept restfully its continuance. Moreover, it is quite independent of time in laying hold of it. While natural character sooner or later finds a certain sort of relief from the mere lapse of time, the trusting heart may at once under the heaviest blow find the Rest which Christ promises. Time may intensify and deepen the Rest; but the Rest itself has not to be waited for one moment beyond the exercising of the trust which both produces and sustains it.

Another important secret of Rest under trial is to recognise our own individual and personal relationship to God, and His individual and personal dealing with us.<sup>1</sup> We must remember our individuality before Him, that we are not lost in the crowd from His sight. So universal is His knowledge, that it embraces all; yet so individual is it, that it centres on

<sup>1</sup> See page 42.

each, as if each one were the only object upon which it is exercised.

And as with our persons, so it is with our circumstances. His knowledge of them all is as distinct and individual as if each of us were the only one whose circumstances He knew.

And furthermore, it is so important to remember that all things come from God. It is hard sometimes to realize this in reference to sorrow, and especially to those sorrows which reach us through the wrong-doing of others. Indeed, all sorrow is, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, the result of sin. But faith recognises that even what seem to us to be evils are, if not the direct working of God, at all events deliberately permitted by Him to fall upon us, when He could most certainly prevent them. And one of the deepest secrets of Rest is to take everything, without questioning whether it seems good or evil, direct from the very hand of God, as the first great Cause of all.<sup>1</sup> This at once takes the mind off the second causes, which are but His instruments, and absolutely under His immediate control.

It is the consideration of the second causes which adds so much bitterness to the weight

<sup>1</sup> See page 52.

of sorrow. We are angry with the person who has wronged us, when we should never think of being angry with God who permitted him to do us the injury. We vex ourselves that circumstances resulted in some sorrow, which we think would not have happened had the circumstances been different; when we should not think of being vexed, did we realize that it was the will of God for us to be thus tried. Indeed, there can be no Rest, until faith has risen above the second cause of the sorrow or the disappointment, and has fixed its hold upon God as the supreme and first Cause of all.

And if we put these considerations together, and take the sum of them, it amounts to this—that every one of us may rest assured that all life's sorrows and trials, however they may reach us, whether through the wrong-doings of others or of ourselves, whether springing from what seem to be mistakes or accidents, go to make up God's personal and individual dealings with us. And the amount of Rest we enjoy just becomes a question of the amount of our confidence in the love and wisdom of God. And this is faith's battle-field, whereon it meets its severest conflicts, winning its most exalted victories, or suffering its most disastrous defeats.

And so it is that faith is able to find Rest, not in the removal or mitigation of the trial, but under the full weight of its burden. Indeed, faith would not even wish its removal, until it is the will of God to remove it.

This, we may safely say, is the highest stage of Christian experience with regard to trial. It passes beyond what is commonly understood by 'resignation.' This word is often used in reference to the believer's attitude towards his trials. It expresses, of course, all that there *is* in many hearts under the blow of sorrow, and even more than there is in some. But its usual meaning does not by any means express all that there *may* be. The most that we can say of it is, that it is the *negative* side of the believer's view of sorrow. It implies the absence of all murmuring, the uncomplaining submission to what *must* be endured. And as far as it goes, it is so far so good. But it does not go as far as it is the privilege of the believer to go in his trials and sorrows.

There is also the *active* side of his view of them. There is the hearty acceptance of them, in simple, loving trust that the wisdom of God can make no mistakes as to what is best, and that His love is too real and intense to afflict

without the most, absolute and undoubted necessity for it.

But we must be very careful here to guard against a mistake which may be a source of difficulty to many, or we may quickly lose our Rest.


By the 'hearty acceptance' of a trial, and by 'not wishing its removal until it is God's will to remove it,' we must not do violence to the separate and independent human will which God has given us, by supposing that in itself it is sinful, and a mark of rebellion, to have a consciousness that we should prefer a different issue. Some get perplexed about this. They feel the existence of a wish that things were otherwise than God's will appears to be; and they fear that their consecration is so far defective, and consequently their Rest becomes clouded.

We believe that it is not inconsistent with the very highest form of Christian experience to be at times conscious of such a wish. The human nature which God has given us, has its leanings and its preferences, which are in themselves perfectly innocent. There is nothing, for example, sinful in that shrinking of our nature from pain and suffering which would

lead us to prefer avoiding it ; nor in that clinging of our nature to those loved ones whom we would prefer, if it might be, to be spared to us ; nor yet in our natural preference for the successful accomplishment of cherished schemes which we believe to be to the glory of God. Human nature, quite apart from the sin and ruin in which it is involved, would never prefer to suffer and to sorrow, unless it is convinced that there is some real advantage in it, and even then it shrinks from the trial considered in itself.

We have perhaps the clearest evidence of this in our blessed Lord Himself. His spotless and holy manhood shrank from the bitter sorrow and suffering which was before Him. And not the slightest shadow of sin was involved in the thrice-repeated agonizing prayer, that the cup might, if it were possible, pass from Him. But the reality and fulness of His devotion to His Father appeared in His heartily entering into the necessity of the suffering, just because it was His Father's will, and in His refusing to yield to the otherwise sinless shrinking from the weight.

So with ourselves, in our far-off and imperfect imitation of Him. Let us not write bitter





things against ourselves, if we feel conscious of wishing otherwise than what is ; but let us rise to the highest level of consecration, and see even in this very wish something which we may consecrate to Him ; and let us heartily accept His will, when we are constrained to say, '*Not my will*, but Thine.'

And as we saw with anxiety, so it must be with the actual blow of sorrow itself. The great secret of Rest is not in merely intellectual considerations about it, but in just responding to our Lord's gracious invitation, 'Come unto Me.' There will be no real and hearty acceptance of it, such as we have described, until we have simply brought it to Him. In His presence it will lose much of its weight ; and fellowship with Him in it will impart even a sense of enjoyment in it which would be otherwise absolutely impossible.

And never let us forget to bring to Him the little sorrows as well as the heavier, the daily worries and trials of which life so largely consists—the little disappointments, the plans disarranged, the work interrupted, the action misunderstood, the motive misjudged, the unpleasant letter received, the difficult lesson to be learned, the tiresome child, the little diffi-

culties arising in family life, the stinging words addressed to us, the needed article mislaid or lost, the treasured object spoiled or broken, in fact everything as it arises :

'Just to leave in His dear hand  
*Little* things,  
All we cannot understand,  
All that stings.'

And in coming unto Him with our sorrows, let us remember that He is able in a very special way to enter into them with us. He was emphatically 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief' (Isa. liii. 3). There is no form of sorrow or suffering, whether physical or mental, to which He was a stranger. His is not the feeling of compassion and pity only, but of real and true sympathy. He can feel not only for, but also *with*, the suffering one. And He can and does give heart-relief and Rest of soul which enables the trusting one to bear patiently and calmly the trial, and to wait confidently and thankfully a release either in the life now present, or, if this cannot be, to look forward to the 'no more sorrow' of the New Jerusalem.

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